



June 28, 2019

Dear Member of the Law & Justice Interim Committee,

On behalf of our activists all across Montana, I urge your support for the study of HJ 36, studying compensation for our citizens who are wrongfully convicted.

H.J. 36 would study providing exonerated Montanans who have lost years of their lives to wrongful convictions compensation for the damage done and to give them better opportunities to start anew.

- Montana has the weakest exoneree compensation law in the country, only providing tuition assistance to those Montanans exonerated through DNA evidence—this doesn't help those exonerated by other means, such as confessions, and has never been used.
- The federal government provides \$50,000 per year of wrongful imprisonment—Montana should meet this national standard for someone it has unjustly deprived of years of life potential.
- Compensating in cash rather than tuition assistance lets those unfairly denied the opportunity to pursue happiness do so in whatever way best suits them, not what legislators decide is a good use of an exoneree's time. The least Montana can do in repairing the damage of lost freedom is giving exonerees the maximum freedom for using their compensation.

Hopefully, we can end wrongful convictions in Montana once and for all. But until then, we should at least ensure that exonerees are compensated for the time and opportunities wrongful convictions have cost them. It is for these reasons that I ask you to include HJ 36 in the committee's work plan for this interim session.

Sincerely,

Patrick Webb

Director of Grassroots Operations & Lead Lobbyist

Americans for Prosperity-Montana